

Sends Letter to Vice President Biden Calling for Aggressive Oversight of Stimulus Funds

WASHINGTON. D.C. – House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-CA) who was named to the newly-formed House-Senate Fiscal Responsibility Working Group, today sent Vice President Joe Biden a letter requesting his office to “provide this Committee with its plan to oversee the implementation of nearly \$800 billion in taxpayer funds” by March 12th.

“If the Troubled Asset Relief Program (“TARP”) is any indication, unchecked efforts to rapidly spend billions of dollars involve significant risks of waste, fraud, and abuse, and raise serious questions about the appropriate distribution of taxpayer dollars,” Issa wrote. “Six months later, Americans have been saddled with enormous debt with nothing to show for it. Proper oversight at the inception of the program would have prevented this.”

The House-Senate Fiscal Responsibility Working Group includes Senators John Thune, John Cornyn, Johnny Isackson and Reps. Eric Cantor, Paul Ryan, Jeb Hensarling, Kevin Brady and Jerry Moran and will serve as a watchdog to ensure that taxpayer dollars in the stimulus bill are spent in a transparent and accountable way.

“There is nothing more crucial at this juncture than to have proactive measures in place before any money is spent,” Issa said. “Too often, we identify waste, fraud and abuse after the fact – when it is impossible to recoup lost dollars. The effort to stimulate the economy must not come at the expense of oversight and we must be diligent in our efforts to ensure that billions of dollars do not fall victim to programmatic failures and bureaucratic mishaps.”

The text of the letter is provided below:

The Honorable Joe Biden

Vice President

The White House

Dear Mr. Vice President:

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law. This law allocates nearly \$800 billion to fund government run programs that promise to put Americans to work and stimulate the economy. Due to the accelerated timeline for disbursement, however, I am concerned the recipients may not be prepared to exact the necessary oversight measures to ensure fiscal responsibility.

Sudden influxes of funds outside the normal appropriations process have traditionally caused programmatic challenges within agencies. If the Troubled Asset Relief Program ("TARP") is any indication, unchecked efforts to rapidly spend billions of dollars involve significant risks of waste, fraud, and abuse, and raise serious questions about the appropriate distribution of taxpayer dollars. With the TARP, there was never a clear idea as to the purpose of the program, how the money was to be spent, and whether American households would actually benefit from the unprecedented spending. Six months later, Americans have been saddled with enormous debt with nothing to show for it. Proper oversight at the inception of the program would have prevented this.

I have written to the Inspector General of each agency receiving funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and requested that they provide the Committee with a detailed description of their plans to oversee this unprecedented spending. Though Inspectors General traditionally conduct audits after the fact, I have asked that they take proactive measures to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. Unlike with the TARP, we should have a clear path toward fiscal responsibility.

In your new role as Stimulus Czar, I respectfully request that your office provide this Committee

with its plan to oversee the implementation of nearly \$800 billion in taxpayer funds. I ask that you submit this plan and contact the Committee to schedule a briefing by March 12, 2009. There is nothing more crucial at this juncture than to have proactive measures in place before any money is spent. As the Administration urgently works to stimulate the economy, we must ensure these billions do not fall victim to programmatic failures and bureaucratic mishaps.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time if you require any assistance or would like to further discuss this matter. You may also contact Minority Staff Director Larry Brady or Professional Staff Member Molly Boyl at 202-225-5074.